"THE HONEST ENTHUSIASM OF RELIGIOUS OPINION:" CHRISTIAN REPUBLICANISM AND AMERICA'S QUASI-WAR WITH FRANCE

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Abstract

ELIZABETH SAWYER: “The Honest Enthusiasm of Religious Opinion:” Christian Republicanism and America’s Quasi-War with France
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America was embroiled in an unlikely quasi-war in the summer of 1798. French and American naval forces clashed in the Caribbean waters off the coast of the United States, all as a result of a break down in diplomacy between the French Directory and John Adams’ Federalist administration. Despite this rapid decline in Franco-American political relations, most of the American public remained supportive of the French cause. The goal of this thesis is to determine how this antithetical relationship between political happening and public will resulted in military engagement. I argue that the Federalists used religious suasion in the form of Christian Republicanism and civic piety to persuade the American people that military defense and engagement was the best course of action.

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Introduction

In January 1798, Federalist party leader Alexander Hamilton received a letter from James McHenry, the secretary of war under John Adams. Although Hamilton had resigned from his position as secretary of the treasury in 1795 he used his connections with loyal party members - such as McHenry – to remain abreast of the Adams administration's actions and provide advice that influenced policy decisions. In the wake of the tumultuous decline of Franco-American relations, McHenry was asking for just such advice. The Federalist-dominated executive branch had prepared a controversial defense plan and was debating whether the nation should go to war. McHenry was not prepared to come down on either side of the issue without word from the retired party leader. Hamilton's response was prompt and decisive: "It is an undoubted fact that there is a very general strong aversion to war in the minds of the people of this country," Hamilton wrote, "and a considerable part of the community is still particularly averse to a war with that republic."[1] He went on to give various other reasons why war with France was ill-advised but the issue at the front of his mind and first from his pen was that of public opinion – no matter how justified the Federalists felt in engaging France, the American people simply would not stand for it.

And yet, despite this overwhelming lack of public support in January 1798, the United States was embroiled in the naval Quasi-War with France within six months, entirely with the public's consent. Congress passed consecutive acts in July of that same year breaking treaties

[1] Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, January 27-February 11, 1798, in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton,* ed. Harold C. Syrett, Volume XXI, 1961-1987, (New York: Columbia University), 342.

with France, establishing a standing army, and allowing American vessels to arm against, seek out, and engage French ships. My goal is to determine how this abrupt change in public opinion and support was possible. How were the Federalists able to convince the nation that their desire to defend against France, and potentially engage in war, was a just one?

The answer I propose to this question is hinted at in Hamilton's letter. Hamilton provided suggestion after suggestion for the Federalists' course of action in his four-page communiqué but it was not until the final sentences of his letter that he provided any insight into how to deal with problem of public opinion: "The government will be very unwise, if it does not make the most of the religious prepossessions of our people – opposing the enthusiasm of religious opinion to the [frenzy] of political fanaticism."[2] Hamilton argued that the Federalist government needed to use religious sentiment rather than political suasion to convey the necessity of the Federalist defense program. In the following months, the Federalists followed Hamilton's suggestion and orchestrated a series of occasional religious holidays; used the pulpit as a platform for Federalist propaganda; and published a series of sermons and orations that were in support of the defense program. The Federalists used the burgeoning print culture of the Early Republic to engage the public as well, but they relied heavily on the popular religion to not only reach the American public but also to persuade them. I will explore *why* the Federalists chose to use the religious sphere to convince Americans of the necessity of their plan and to what degree this method was successful. I argue that the Federalists used popular religion to draw on nationalist and religious discourse, specifically that of Christian republicanism and civic piety, to effectually convince

[2] Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, January 27-February 11, 1798, in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton,* ed. Harold C. Syrett, Volume XXI, 1961-1987, (New York: Columbia University), 342.

Americans that the Federalist defense program was not a partisan political cause, but a sacred nationalist one.

Historians agree that "Christian republicanism" was a concept that took shape, and eventually took hold of America, during the Revolutionary period. In the decades leading up to the Revolution, Americans experienced a barrage of rhetoric that overlapped religious and republican causes and came to believe that "the cause of God had come to include a particular definition of political liberty," blurring "the distinction between the kingdom of God and their own political community." The new republic began to view itself as God's chosen nation, a "New Israel," that was burdened with glorious purpose *because* of its dedication to freedom.[3]

The development of Christian republicanism during the Revolutionary period led to the development of civic piety. Although many communities were united under religious auspices during the colonial period, America was in a state of religious declension; the fight for independence only worsened this decline in religious observance. Between the distraction of the war and the rise of rational, natural thought, Americans continued to turn their backs on the church. The movement away from religion was furthered when the Constitution was ratified with the Establishment Clause, thereby confirming that Americans would not be united under the religion but rather under law. Cause of country then filled the vacuum created by religious declension and Americans were connected by their shared reverence for the "sacred cause of liberty." As religious historian Sydney Ahlstrom explained, "the Union became a transcendent object of reverence… Americans became stewards of a sacred trust, while the country's statesmen, orators, and poets gradually brought a veritable mystical theology of the Union into

[3] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1977), 17-44.

being." This dedication and reverence became Christian patriotism, or civic piety, and these "conceptions became the cornerstone of American political tradition."[4]

As mentioned previously, many scholars, particularly religious historians, have addressed the development of Christian republicanism and civic piety in the burgeoning American republic; however, the majority of literature relating to the development of these discourses follows a formulaic pattern. Religious historians who have discussed religion in the Revolutionary Age and the Early Republic argue that religious leaders' use of political language provided religion with the reach and relevancy it needed to expand during the mid-1800s. More specifically, these historians aim to show how political language used by religious leaders, and vice versa, precipitated the religiosity and religious freedom that characterized the Second Great Awakening.[5]

Whereas nationalist religious conceptions have garnered copious amounts of scholarly attention, America's Quasi-War with France, on the other hand, has been largely ignored. Alexander DeConde's 1966 survey text, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1791-1801,* is the definitive work on America's brief military engagement with France. Whereas DeConde discusses the socio-political factors that contributed

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[4] Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 362-383.

[5] see Mark A. Noll's bibliographic essay in the appendix of *America's God: From Abraham Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln,* (New York: Oxford University, 2002); M.L. Bradbury's essay, "Structures of Nationalism," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert's edited volume entitled *Religion in the Revolutionary Age* (University of Virginia, 1994); Sidney Earl Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America,* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Perry Miller, *Nature's Nation,* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1967); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1977); Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

to the rapid movement toward naval engagement, most literature after DeConde's work focuses on the military and logistic aspects of the Quasi-War.[6] In recent years, however, historians have begun to look at the Quasi-War as a testament to the Federalists ability to manipulate popular politics. Historians such as Todd Estes and Thomas M. Ray have published a book and article, respectively, that acknowledge the Federalists use of the XYZ papers to court the American public and create popular support for their controversial policies.[7]

Although historians have recognized the use of Christian republicanism and the Federalists' appeals to the public to garner support for the Quasi-War, very few scholarly works fall within the cross-section of these two bodies of literature. David Waldstreicher briefly mentions the Federalist use of religion in his 1997 text, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes.* He acknowledges President Washington's Day of Thanksgiving in 1795 and Adams' days of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer in 1798 and 1799 but he does not make the connection between the latter and the abrupt shift in public opinion toward acceptance and approbation of the Federalist defense program.[8] Charles Dickson discusses the Federalists' use of religion – especially the Fast Days of 1798 and 1799 – during the Quasi-War as an example of partisan perspectives on the involvement of religion in government. Similar to Waldstreicher, Dickson

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[6] For more information about America's naval engagements during the Quasi-War, see Michael A Palmer's *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801* and Howard P. Nash's, *The Forgotten Wars: The Role of the U.S. in the Quasi War with France and the Barbary Wars 1798-1805.*

[7] Thomas M. Ray, "'Not One Cent for Tribute': The Public Addresses and American Popular Reaction to the XYZ Affair, 1798-1799, *Journal of the Early Republic,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (1983), 389-412; Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture,* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

[8] David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), 152-153.

acknowledges the existence of religious popular politics but does not discuss the importance of the phenomenon in the development of public support for the Quasi-War.[9] One of the aims of this essay is to bridge the aforementioned bodies of literature and show how the well-explored concepts of Christian patriotism and civic piety were not only influential in developing American religious tradition and culture during the Revolution, but also how they played an important role in policy and popular politics in the Early Republic.

This thesis will show how the Federalists used religion to create popular support for the Quasi-War by tracking the party's use of popular religion in their appeals to the American people about the nation's declining relationship with France and the necessity of the Federalist defense program. There will be three sections, each privileging a specific group of Federalists and showing how their use of religion utilized the larger discourses of Christian republicanism and civic piety in connection with the Quasi-War. The first section is focused on the Federalist political leaders and the days of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer in 1798 and 1799; this section will explore how the Federalist political leaders used the fast days to align the Federalist defense program with the sacred cause of country. The second section looks at the Federalist clergy's use of religious rhetoric to garner support for the Quasi-War. These grassroots religious leaders used the space provided by the fast days to appeal to the public's civic piety and religiosity through sermons and orations. The third section will show how the Federalists' efforts affected the public by looking at the way that the Federalists' religious explanation and justification of the war were reflected in the larger American citizenry's expression of allegiance and support.

Section I: Federalist Party Leaders

[9] Charles Ellis Dickson, "Jeremiads in the New Republic: The Case of National Fasts in the John Adams Administration," *The New England Quarterly* Vol. 60, No. 2 (1987): 193-194.

The organized use of popular religion and religious rhetoric to convince the American people of the nationalist implications of the Federalist defense plan began with Federalist party leaders. In 1798 and 1799, President John Adams issued two proclamations declaring the observation of two days of "fasting, humiliation, and prayer" – Americans were to abstain from all daily activity and instead use their free time to ask God to protect the American nation from the trespasses of a particular foreign nation. This section will explore why the Federalist political leaders were so dedicated to government-sponsored religious fasts and how their interpretation of the occasional holiday allowed them to cast their defense program as a hallowed display of nationalism rather than a prejudiced expression of partisanship. The readiness and frequency with which the Federalist party leaders suggested, proclaimed, and observed occasional religious fasts suggests a party-wide agreement that the fast was the most effective way that the government could unite the American people under religious auspices by using nationalist, religious rhetoric to persuade the people of the necessity of the Federalist defense plan.

The Federalist leaders' inclination toward religious appeals, the fast day in particular, was undoubtedly because of the occasional holiday's rich tradition in America. Fast days began as a religious tradition in New England. The fast was a local holiday in which all members of a community forewent daily responsibilities and distractions in order to come together for absolution and salvation. Congregations would gather for two sermons, one in the morning and another in the evening before breaking the fast, and the ministers would remind their flock that everyone in the community should live a pious life that abided by the rules God set out for them. The underlying goal was to renew the local population's religious devotion by reminding them through their sacrifice and through the words of religious leaders that their lives were to be

guided by their religion, thus ideally uniting the community in its dedication to piety in all aspects of life.[10]

During the Revolutionary era, occasional religious holidays began to take on a slightly more political bent. As mentioned previously, the fast days were a local and extremely religious phenomenon but on the eve of the American Revolution, the Continental Congress declared the first nationwide fast day. The Congress' day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer was even more aberrant from the traditional religious holidays because the focus was indisputably political. The first national fast day, declared on July, 12, 1775, asked "all the inhabitants of the English colonies" to observe a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer on July 20, "that we may, with united hearts and voices… [beseech God]… to remove our present calamities… and bless our rightful sovereign, King George the Third... and… that a speedy end may be put to the civil discord between Great Britain and the American colonies..." The Continental Congress went on to ask Americans to pray "that these colonies may be ever under the care and protection of a kind Providence, and be prospered in all their interests… and that America may soon behold a graceful interposition of Heaven."[11] The Continental Congress laced religious rhetoric with political purpose in order to make the point that King George III was not only offending his people with his actions, but that he was also offending God and it was only when aggressive British policies ceased that America would once again be in the "kind Providence" that served the colonies' interests.

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[10] W. DeLoss Love, Jr. *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England.* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1895), 338-340.

[11] John Hancock in W. DeLoss Love, Jr. *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England.* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1895), 339-340.

Much as the Federalists would do in 1798, the political leaders in the Continental Congress used religion to create widespread support for their cause. The issues that sparked the Revolution affected various colonies disproportionately; thus, those who wished to move toward revolution needed to create the widespread support necessary for America to achieve its in independence.[12] Although the excerpt above is evidence of Americans asking for reconciliation, in subsequent proclamations the Constitutional Congress asked Americans to distance themselves from the British empire and unite as one body with the colonies' best interest in mind. They encouraged and maintained this thinking through the religious language and structure of the fast day. Throughout the Revolution, the Continental Congress held an annual fast day in the spring and an annual day of thanksgiving in the fall, and each encouraged Americans to pray for peace, liberty, and an independent America.

The fast days fostered a strong connection in the public mind between God's plan and America's goals. In the 1778 proclamation, for example, Congress asked Americans to pray that "it may please Him to bless the civil rulers and the people, strengthen and perpetuate our union, and in his own good time, establish us in the peaceable enjoyment of our rights and liberties."[13] Just as in the 1775 fast day proclamation, Congress equated the American cause with godliness for nationalist purposes. The governing body used religious discourse, specifically that of divine republic and the duty that American citizens owe to their godly nation, as a way to inspire patriotism and nationalism. The Continental Congress did not ask the citizens of the United States to pray against Britain so much as they were asked them to pray for America.

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[12] Thomas Cuming Hall, *The Religious Background of American Culture*, Reprint, (New York: Federick Ungar Publishing, 1959), 161.

[13] Continental Congress, *In Congress, March 7, 1778,* (Boston, 1778). Broadside.

There is no doubt that the Revolutionary tradition of the fast days played a role in the party leaders' decision to proclaim the occasional fast days of 1798 and 1799. The majority of the Federalist party leaders were of the Revolutionary generation and the two most influential Federalist leaders, John Adams and Alexander Hamilton, were both members of the Constitutional Congress that passed the aforementioned occasional religious holidays during the war. They each saw how effective the nationalist-religious discourse was in establishing a foundational Christian republicanism, as well as inspiring a deep-seeded sense of duty and civic piety among the public. With this rich history of the national fast in mind, it is not difficult to imagine why the Federalist party's first instinctual response to the need for public support was a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer.

Just as with the Continental Congress' proclamations, the Federalists' goal in declaring the fast days was to use the nationalist discourse of Christian republicanism and civic piety to build widespread support for their cause. Although the party's intention for the use of popular religion is clear from the very use of the fast day itself, it is even more evident in looking at the text of the fast day proclamations. The descriptions of the United States from the proclamations of 1798 and 1799 were strategically designed to cast America and its government as "favors" from God that allowed the nation to have the liberty and freedom that the Federalists argue had made the nation so successful. This language also implies that because God had granted the favors that allowed for the American republic to develop in a specific way, the manifestations of the nation's development – its government and political system in particular – were sacred. In the 1798 proclamation, for example, the President closed the declaration with these words: "I recommend… the duties of humiliation and prayer be accompanied by fervent Thanksgiving… not only for having hitherto protected and preserved the people of the United States in their

independent enjoyment of… religious and civil freedom, but also for… conferring upon them many and great [favors] conducive to the happiness and prosperity of a nation."[14] In this excerpt, Adams and the other Federalist party leaders explicitly stated that America's success was based on the blessings bestowed upon it by God; therefore, the nation and its purpose were divine. Similar language appears in the 1799 proclamation; Adams once again asks Americans to give "fervent thanksgiving to the Author of All Good" and "be united for the countless favors which He is still continuing to the people of the United States, and which render their condition as a nation eminently happy…"[15]

The Federalists further developed religious discourse in their fast day proclamations by intimating that since America was sacred, Americans had a duty as both citizens and Christians to protect the United States. In 1798, Adams wrote: "As the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection and blessing of Almighty God; and the national acknowledgment of this truth is not only an indispensible duty which the people owe to Him, but a duty whose natural influence is favorable to the promotion of that morality and piety…"[16] In this passage the President is blunt in his statement that Americans have a "duty" to pray for the protection of God's chosen nation. He was equally explicit when he wrote, "it is also most reasonable… that men… who owe their improvements to the social state, and who

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[14] John Adams, "By the President of the United States, A Proclamation." *The Phenix Windham Herald*, April 12, 1798.

[15] John Adams, "Proclamation for a National Fast," in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States,* Vol. 9, Edited by Charles Francis Adams, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1856), 268.

[16] John Adams, "By the President of the United States, A Proclamation." *The Phenix Windham Herald*, April 12, 1798.

derive their enjoyments from it, should, as a society, make their acknowledgments of dependence and obligation to Him who hath endowed them with these capacities and elevated them… by these distinctions."[17] It was not enough for Americans to simply acknowledge that America was the New Israel – it was necessary that each citizen took an active role in America's divinity by promoting and protecting its godly institutions.

The strategy of the Federalists' fast day proclamations becomes even more apparent when analyzing the way the documents address France. Each proclamation stated that the purpose of the national fast was to pray for America "in season of difficulty and danger." Although France was never mentioned by name, it was alluded to. In the initial proclamation issued, the President wrote, "the United States of America are at present placed in a hazardous and afflictive situation, by the unfriendly disposition, conduct and demands of a foreign power, evinced by repeated refusals to receive our messengers of reconciliation and peace, by depredations on our commerce, and the infliction of injuries on very many of or fellow citizens…"[18] Adams remained vague in using the term "foreign power"; however, his remarks were a perfect summary of reasons for the decline of Franco-American relations. The President indirectly mentioned France again in his 1799 proclamation. He stated that "as… the most precious interests of the people of the United States are still held in jeopardy by the hostile designs and insidious acts of a foreign nation, as well as by the dissemination among them of those principles, subversive of the foundations of all religious, moral, and social obligations, that

[17] John Adams, "Proclamation for a National Fast," in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States,* Vol. 9, Edited by Charles Francis Adams, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1856), 268.

[18] John Adams, "By the President of the United States, A Proclamation." *The Phenix Windham Herald*, April 12, 1798.

have produced incalculable mischief and misery in other countries."[19] These brief statements show that above all else, the Federalist government perceived France as a threat to the United States, and wished to convey that threat to the American people.

When put in conversation with other components of these complex proclamations, it becomes clear the Federalists subtly asked Americans to pray for their country, but more specifically to protect the nation from France's advances. Because Americans had a responsibility both as Christians and as patriots to use their religiosity to protect the nation, Americans needed to band together in the pews of their churches to express their support for the government, especially the government's actions against France. Adams made this exact point in 1799 when he stated:

> The observance of special seasons for public religious solemnities, is happily calculated to avert the evils which we ought to deprecate, and to excite to the performance of the duties which we ought to discharge, by calling and fixing the attention of the people at large to the momentous truths already recited, by affording opportunity to teach and inculcate them, by animating devotion, and giving to it the character of a national act.[20]

As Adams made clear, the Federalists' intention in issuing these fast day proclamations was to call Americans' attention to the dangers that the nation faced and to inspire the citizens to take actions through "the character of a national act." But the development of ideas within the fast day proclamations speaks to the party's larger cause as well. As evidenced above, the national days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer were a way for the Federalists to cast their defense plan against France as a duty and a necessity. According to the Federalists, France was an affront to

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[19] John Adams, "Proclamation for a National Fast," in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States,* Vol. 9.Edited by Charles Francis Adams, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1856), 268.

[20] John Adams, "Proclamation for a National Fast," in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States,* Vol. 9 Edited by Charles Francis Adams, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1856), 268.

American sanctity – it threatened to disrupt God's chosen nation by systematically taking away her blessings through physical attack and through the dispersal of disruptive ideas; therefore, Americans had a religious and civic duty to pray for protection from France and support the government's defense plan. In the words of Perry Miller, by virtue of the implied message within the text of the fast day proclamations, the Federalists used religious rhetoric and discourse to subliminally ask Americans to "[pray] for John Adams."[21]

The Federalists' fast day proclamations were important because of the messages they communicated to the American people. They were of additional significance because they also created a general space for political discussion about Franco-American relations and the on-coming Quasi-War within the religious sphere. The next section of the paper will look at the space that the Federalists' efforts created and show how Federalist-leaning religious leaders utilized it to garner support for the Federalist party's cause.

Section II: Influence and Irreligion

Although the Federalist party leaders created space for a political discussion of the rapidly declining Franco-American relations within the religious sphere, it was the Federalist clergy that provided the dialogue that fueled such discussions. When referring to the Federalist clergy, I specifically mean ordained ministers who aligned themselves with Federalist policies and the Federalist party during the Early Republic period. Although there were a smattering of Federalist clergymen across various denominations, the Federalist clergy largely consisted of

[21] Perry Miller, *Nature's Nation,* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1967), 112.

Congregationalist ministers in New England.[22] This section will look at how the Federalist clergy's active involvement in praising the Federalist defense program was an important step in the Federalist party's ultimate aim of conveying their policies as sacred and nationalist. Religious leaders who agreed with the Federalist defense plan expounded on the ideas intimated in the fast day proclamations through their discussion on French irreligion and conveyed to their congregations that support for the defense program was a civic and religious duty. In using their position as religious leaders and the rhetoric it provided them, the clergy gave life to the Federalists beliefs and made the nationalist perception of the defense plan accessible to large swaths of the American republic.

The Federalist clergy used their position as religious leaders and the manipulation of the concept of irreligious influence to suggest that the ultimate aim of the Federalist defense plan was to protect the sacred American republic. By juxtaposing France and the United States and highlighting their understanding of the effects of irreligion on the European nation, the clergy conveyed that should France's irreligion spread to the United States, either through suasion and influence or actual invasion, America would be deleteriously affected. The Federalist clergy portrayed America as a bastion of divine order – a "New Israel." Congregationalist minister Levie Frisbie stated as much in his sermon from Massachusetts' annual fast in 1799. He said: "We are people whom God hath been pleased to distinguish with privileges and benefits, civil and religious, great in their nature, their number, their magnitude and variety. And whom he hath

[22] For more information on the Congregationalist clergy's alignment with the Federalist party see Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Righteous Republic: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy*, (New York: Oxford University, 2001), Donald Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry 1750-1850*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1978), and Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State,* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2002).

placed in a situation… to cultivate and improve virtue, religion, national peace, liberty, dignity, and happiness to a degree of perfection seldom or never experienced."[23] Manasseh Cutler made a similar point in his sermon for the national fast in 1799, in which he referred to America's liberties as a "sacred deposit" which "Providence has cosigned to our care."[24] These ministers' words are indicative of a widespread espousal of the foundational tenets of Christian republicanism – the Federalist clergy perpetually reminded Americans that theirs was as a nation chosen, overseen, and blessed by God, as made evident by the boundless "perfection" that came from the security of civil and religious rights.[25]

Federalist religious leaders emphasized American perfection so that they could then draw a distinct comparison between the divine order of America and the irreligious chaos of France. One minister expressed that "deism and atheism have long been propagated among that people, and at the revolution it appeared in full maturity. Their very clergy, the professed ministers of the religion of Christ, headed by the Archbishop of Paris, came before national convention, and abjured the Christian religion, declaring that they considered it an impostor."[26] To be fair, this assessment of France was not entirely incorrect; in their efforts to eradicate all vestiges of the *ancien regime,* the French systematically broke down Catholicism's influence in the country by

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[23] Levie Frisbie, *The Nature and Effects of the Works of Darkness,* (Newburyport: Angier March, 1799), 45.

[24] Manasseh Cutler, *A Sermon Delivered at Hamilton, on the Day of the National Fast,* (Salem: Joshua Cushing, 1799), 16.

[25] Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Abraham Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln,* (New York: Oxford University, 2002), 12.

[26] William Linn, *A Discourse on National Sins,* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1798), 22.

disestablishing the religion and emphasizing the worship of reason over the worship of God. Some examples of what Noah Webster referred to as the "atheistical attacks on Christianity" were the conversion of Notre Dame from a Catholic cathedral to a "Temple of Reason"; the development of ten-day decade sans Sabbath; and the creation of the revolutionary calendar that was driven by logic and reason rather than Roman Catholic holidays.[27] The Federalist clergy blamed the irreligion that resulted from the suppression of the Christianity for rampant chaos, inconsistency, and immorality in France. New Hampshire Congregationalist Walter Harris described France as "a nation, where all the passions of corrupt nature are let loose without the restraints of religion; and where they rage in all the hideous forms that pride, deceit, lust, envy, and malice, can invent."[28] Whereas the United States remained religious and perfect in its ordained order, France's infidelity made it a hotbed of vice and "heathen practices."

The clergy described a vast contrast between the United States and France in an effort to convince their congregations that should the same irreligion that existed in France firmly take root in America, the divine nation would undoubtedly crumble. Pastor Allen Bradford made this point in his sermon for 1798 national day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer:

> Our religious rights and privileges, my countrymen, are, also in the greatest danger from the threatening and intended influence of French principles and politics in America. If France obtains the dominion and government of our country, the Christian religion… which is the great support and safeguard of morality… will soon be utterly discarded… If such a state of things should take place in this country, all order in society would be

[27] Noah Webster, "The Revolution in France," in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805,* ed. Ellis Sandoz, (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 1239.

[28] Walter Harris, *A Discourse Delivered at Dunbarton, New Hampshire,* (Concord: George Hough, 1799), 14.

> destroyed, the motives to morality would be no more, and we should be deprived of all that comfort, which arises from the firm belief of righteous providence.[29]

Bradford minced no words in portraying France as an irreligious threat to the United States. Many Congregationalists also expressed to their listeners that French atheism, heathenism, and influence should be feared because it already existed in American society. Presbyterian minister Jonathan Freeman for example insisted "the French have gone to awful lengths against the religion of Jesus. I mention the profanity of France, because our greatest danger comes from this quarter… She is a powerful nation, and manifestly aiming at the universal dominion… The contagion of this nation has already reached us."[30]

Religious leaders also used their sermons to argue that the best way Americans could exercise their civic piety and protect the sacred American republic was through military defense. As one minister stated, "the experience of mankind points out to us piety to the Supreme Being, righteousness and temperance, union among ourselves, general information, *and firm defensive position*, as the likeliest means of preserving our peace, as well as our independence."[31] But the Federalist clergy were advocating for a specific kind of defense among their congregations; they wished for Americans to be spiritually resistant but France's threat was so great that strength of spirit would not be enough to preserve the United States. Daniel Dana's warning to his congregation serves as the perfect example of the clergy's urging for physical as well as spiritual

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[29] Allen Bradford, *Two Sermons Delivered at Wiscasset,* (Wiscasset, ME: Hoskins & Sons, 1798), 19-20.

[30] Jonathan Freeman, *A Sermon Delivered at New Windsor and Bethlehem,* (New-Windsor, NY: Jacob Shultz, 1798), 21.

[31] Eliphalet Porter, *A Discourse Delivered at Brookline,* (Boston: John Russell, 1798), 33.

defense: "And the fact is that, in no case is prayer designed to encourage or excuse us in the neglect of natural means and endeavors to attain the blessing we implore, or to avoid the evils we deprecate. Far from this, it lays us under special and strong obligations to employ such means and efforts. To trust in God to save us, while we are at no pains to help ourselves, is but a presumptuous and ungrounded confidence."[32] As Dana's words show, the clergy impressed upon their flocks that it was important for the nation to remain spiritually sound and "avoid the… demoralizing principles of infidelity, which have thrown Europe into a state, on which the rest of mankind look with fear and horror" but it would be foolish of Americans to believe that prayer alone would save them; thus, the Federalist political leader's defense plan became the only solution to the French threat.[33]

The Federalist clergy was unabashed in portraying the Federalist defense plan as the best option for the nation as a whole. One minister asked his listeners to "encourage and promote measures of public safety and [defense] by our countenance and approbation, and [endeavor] by steady and vigorous exertions to give them energy and effect."[34] Whereas these words were a more subtle reference to the Federalists efforts, Jacob Burnap explicitly urged his congregation to support the efforts of the Adams administration: "The government, that is making a stand against the hostile designs and insidious intrigues of the rulers of France… may well call for the

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[32] Daniel Dana, *Two Sermons Delivered April 25, 1799,* (Newburyport: Angier March, 1799), 40.

[33] Nathan Strong, *Political Instruction from the Prophecies of God's Word,* (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1798), 23.

[34] Levie Frisbie, *The Nature and Effects of the Works of Darkness,* (Newburyport: Angier March, 1799), 48.

aid of every friend of religion, and of their country, and mankind."[35] One minister conveyed France's moral and physical threats to the United States as the beginnings of an unavoidable march towards warfare and declared that "if open war must be the consequence, it is evident that we have fought to avoid it; but if it be forced upon us, it becomes our indispensible duty to defend ourselves to the utmost of our ability, and leave the issue to Him who putteth down one nation, and setteth up another, as seemeth good in his sight."[36] These ministers' words are just a few examples of the similar way in which the Federalist clergy chose to encourage their congregations to support the Federalist defense plan as a national defense against a truly "wicked" foe. In highlighting concepts such as "public safety" and stating that the defense program should appeal to "every friend of religion…country… and mankind…" the Federalist clergy used their sermons to link the defense program with civic piety. According the Federalist clergy, all Americans had a responsibility to their nation and to the sacred cause of country; thus, to support the defense program was not a show of partisanship; rather, it was an ardent display of nationalism.

Through their discussion of French irreligion and the numerous dangers that it posed to the sacred American republic, the Federalist clergy promulgated the idea that the Federalist defense plan was not a partisan effort, but the most effective manifestation of civic piety. Unlike the Federalist party leaders' fast day proclamations, the Federalist clergy's sermons were explicit in their discussion of the necessity of the defense plan; however, they used the same method that the Federalist party leaders did in their communication with the American public. The Federalist clergy attempted to rally support among Americans by casting the French issue as a national

[35] Jacob Burnap, *A Sermon Delivered at Merrimac,* (Amherst, NH: Preston, 1799), 15.

[36] Joseph McKeen, *Two Discourses Delivered at Beverly,* (Salem: Thomas C. Cushing), 30.

threat, and the Federalist defense program as a nationalist cause. Religious leaders used French irreligion to make the point that France's influence was not limited to a specific political sect of the country; rather, the European nation had the potential to completely crumble the United States through influence alone. As Reverend William Linn so eloquently stated in 1798, "no army need invade, if licentious principles abound. These will do the fatal business, and blast, by an untimely death, the American Republic, the last and noblest work of God."[37]

Although the Federalist clergy used discussion of French irreligion to gain support their party's defense plan, they also used the circumstances surrounding the Quasi-War to serve their own religious purposes. Clergymen were concerned that the aforementioned movement away from the church would result in widespread infidelity in America, and found evidence to prove this point in all aspects of American society. They decried the passage of the Establishment Clause and were appalled by the vestiges of vice and sin they saw in the cursing, gambling, and self-centered American public. Religious leaders, especially those in the Congregationalist church, believed that this decline in American behavior was indicative of all Americans shirking their religious responsibility.[38] David Tappan, for example, warned that "a system of ideas, or at least of practical feelings… seems growing into fashion in various parts of the American Union… which considers all religious principles, observances, and instructors, as the remains of old monkish ignorance… which are wholly unsuitable and useless, if not a heavy tax upon the

[37] William Linn, *A Discourse on National Sins,* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1798), 28.

[38] Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy*, (New York: Oxford, 2001), 82-83.

public" and reminded the public there was no "substitute in the room of religion, as an adequate prop to their own [favorite] scheme of morality."[39]

The concern for American irreligion grew in the wake of the French Revolution. To Federalist clergy, the French Terror represented the certain result of irreligion; thus, it was a very real possibility should American continue to veer away from the religious path by encouraging irreligion and faction, they would end up in the same bloody chaos as France. The French Revolution served as reminder that it was no longer a possibility that vice could ruin the American republic - it was a certainty.[40]

The clergy's solution to the problem of irreligion in America was to use circumstances surrounding the Quasi-War to convince Americans to come back to the pious path that God set out for them by persuading the public of the dangers that their own irreligion posed. In addition to blaming the threats that America faced on the French, the clergy also conveyed the threat of war with France as God's punishment for America's own irreligion. One minister made this point in saying that "it is our sins which are the procuring cause of our trouble and distress. It is by the righteous permission of God, who directs all events, that we are thus oppressed. Our prosperity had led us to forget God, and has hardened us in sin."[41] Henry Cummings expressed a similar point in 1798 when he said, "true it is, many of the misfortunes and calamities, with

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[39] David Tappan, "A Sermon for the Day of General Election," in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805,* ed. Ellis Sandoz, (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 1108.

[40] Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy*, (New York: Oxford, 2001), 82-83.

[41] Allen Bradford, *Two Sermons Delivered at Wiscasset,* (Wiscasset, ME: Hoskins & Sons, 1798), 14.

which we are visited in this world, are owning in a great measure to the indulgence of our own unruly passions, as their procuring cause."[42] In making accusations such as these, the Federalist clergy used the Quasi-War to focus their concerns about American irreligion. According to the clergy, France's actions were certainly a result of the European nations own misguided irreligion but Americans and their "unruly passions" were to blame as well.

The Federalist clergy cast blame on the American people and their irreligion in order to draw Americans back toward religious observance. As one minister stated, "let us set about a thorough reformation, as a people and as individuals, as rulers and as ruled. And let us guard against all foreign influence, either in civil or religious matters; and be resolved, that all the measures which our adversaries take to seduce us, shall only serve to increase our love and attachment to the sentiments and practice of our holy Religion."[43] The concerned Federalist clergy appropriated the circumstances surrounding the Quasi-War and used them to speak to the larger issue of American irreligion. The clergy's effort were largely ineffective and the spiritual renewal that American religious leaders hoped for did not develop until the Second Great Awakening; however, it is important to note that the Federalist clergy's efforts during the Quasi-War were as important to the contemporary religious cause as they were to the political platform.

The clergy's use of religious discourse and their critique French irreligion to convey the necessity of the Federalist defense plan was important because it connected the national and grassroots political efforts. The Federalist clergy's involvement in the push for the defense plan

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[42] Henry Cumings, *A Sermon Preached at Billerica,* (Boston: John and Thomas Fleet, 1798), 7.

[43] Walter Harris, *A Discourse Delivered at Dunbarton, New Hampshire,* (Concord: George Hough, 1799), 32.

is also worth noting because of how influential it was. Although religious observance declined during the Early Republic period, religious institutions and publications remained incredibly popular among Americans. Mark Noll roughly estimates that anywhere from 40%-80% of the American population regularly attended church services, predominantly in the Congregational and Presbyterian denominations; thus, even at the lowest estimate, the sermons that espoused the Federalist defense plan reached millions of Americans.[44] Furthermore, religious sermons were one of the most popular forms of reading material during the Early Republic so when the Federalist clergymen printed and distributed their sermons, the number of people exposed to the ideas nestled within those homilies increased exponentially. In addition to being printed as broadsides, the sermons were also printed in local and regional newspapers thus further increasing the possibility for exposure to the sermons of the Federalist clergy.[45] The next section will look at the influence of the Federalists religious discourse and show how the ideas espoused by the Federalist political and religious leaders were absorbed and eventually reflected by the American public.

Section III: The American Public

The Federalist political and religious leaders made strong connections between Christian republicanism, civic piety, and the proposed defense plan but their goal was not simply to make the connection between religion and politics; rather, they sought this connection in order to

[44] Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Abraham Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln,* (New York: Oxford University, 2002), 197.

[45] Charles Ellis Dickson, "Jeremiads in the New Republic: The Case of National Fasts in the John Adams Administration," *The New England Quarterly* Vol. 60, No. 2 (1987), 198; for more information on the rise of partisan newspapers see Jeffrey L. Pasley's, *The Tyranny of Printers.*

convince the American people that the Federalists plan was the correct choice for the sacred American republic. This section focuses on the larger citizenry and their response to the Federalist's use of popular religion and religious discourse; it will show that Americans not only began to express support for the Federalist defense plan but they were doing so using the same religious language and rhetoric of the Federalist religious and political leaders employed.

Before discussing this abrupt shift in public opinion, it is important to understand the position Americans held prior to the Federalists' popular religious push. Until 1798, America was largely supportive of France because of the French Revolution. Because United States was fresh from the creation of its own republic, Americans cheered France's efforts and expressed approbation for the European nation's decision to challenge what Americans considered to be an oppressive, monarchical system. One American newspaper referred to the French Revolution as "one the greatest revolutions recorded in the annals of time – a revolution which has restored the nation of France to its long lost liberties – and taught its monarch that the throne of the king is never solid unless founded on the love and fidelity of subjects."[46]

The French Revolution was so important to Americans because it validated their own uprising; Americans were confident that if France felt so moved by the cause of liberty to overthrow their centuries-old political system, then the young American colony certainly blazed the right path in its decision to revolt.[47] Even as late as 1796, then-president George Washington summed up the American opinion of France in a letter he wrote to a French political leader in

[46] "French Revolution," *Cumberland Gazette*, September 25, 1789, 3.

[47] Stanley Elkins and Erik McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism,* (New York: Oxford University, 1993), 309.

which he stated, "I rejoice that liberty… now finds asylum in the bosom of regularly organized government; a government, which, being formed to secure the happiness of the French people, corresponds with the ardent wishes of my heart, while it gratifies the pride of every citizen of the United States, by its resemblance to their own."[48] Washington's words show that the majority of the American public, from newspaper editors to the president, supported France and her revolution despite the fact that Franco-American relations already begun to decline by the mid-1790s.

The beginnings of the anti-French sentiment occurred in response to the XYZ affair. In 1796, French ships began repeatedly attacking American trade vessels en route to Europe. The French were attacking American ships in response to the Jay Treaty. France was particularly upset about the treaty because its political leaders believed that the agreement between Great Britain and America compromised the Franco-American alliance and trade relationship but more importantly, they worried that this agreement would give Britain a beneficial supply line that could have effectively decided the Revolutionary Wars. Therefore the French began attacking American ships in retaliation, and in hopes that their aggression would prevent American trade ships from entering British ports.

In 1797, John Adams sent ambassador Charles Pinckney to France to discuss the recent increase in French attacks on American vessels but the French Directory refused to meet with Pinckney, causing outrage among the Federalists in particular. It was in response to these actions that John Adams proposed the Federalist defense plan to a joint session of Congress; however, Adams did not have the support to implement the defensive measures so he sent additional diplomats to negotiate with the French. The envoys were instructed to work out a treaty that

[48] George Washington to the French Minister, January 1, 1796, in *The Life of Timothy Pickering,* reprint, ed. Octavius Pickering (Bedford, MA: Applewood, 2009), Vol. 4, 349.

would either supersede or amend the existing agreement with France; the American representatives were also instructed not to take any blame for existing Franco-American relations and they were not to agree to support France financially or militarily in the European wars.

The envoys never had the opportunity to follow the instructions they were provided because once again, the French Directory refused to meet with the American emissaries. Four members of the Directory informed the Americans that they would have to pay a fee in order to hold an audience with the rest of the French governing body – this was expected - however the emissaries were taken aback when the representatives of the French government asked for $12 million before the Americans could meet with the Directory. Pinckney, Gerry, and Marshall – the American ambassadors - refused to pay the loan and as the French promised, there was no formal negotiation between the American envoys and the French Directory. There were a series of small meetings outside of traditional diplomatic channels but no solution was reached and the French Directory never sat to hear the terms of the American envoys.

When Adams received word of the situation in France, he renewed his appeals to Congress for defensive measures to be established. Even after reading the papers from the XYZ affair, Congress remained largely unresponsive; therefore, the Federalists turned to the American people. On April 3, 1798, the Federalists published and distributed the XYZ papers in every state and the Federalists strategic publication of the XYZ papers set in motion an outpouring of patriotism and anti-French sentiments. This growing sense of anti-French nationalism became so associated with the Federalists and their platform that it came to be known as "black cockade fever."[49] The Federalists then capitalized on the Americans' weakening affections for France

[49] The black cockade was the symbol of the Federalist party.

through their use of popular religion and nationalist religious discourse to gain support for their cause. [50]

The effectiveness of the Federalists' efforts to use religion to persuade Americans to support the Federalist defense plan was evident in the way that the people began to discuss France. Americans recognized France as real threat to American commerce, but also as a threat to America's political and religious well-being. A group from Concord, Massachusetts wrote, "France, grasping at universal domination, has abandoned every moral and religious principle, trampled on sacred faith, sported with national law, and demanded pecuniary exactions… [to] render us slaves, instead of a free, sovereign and independent people."[51] These Americans put France's religious transgressions on the same footing as their political and legal offenses, and they regarded both as a definitive threat to American sovereignty. The French threat concerned Americans for political and commercial reasons, to be sure, but these quotes show that Americans also began to conceive of the French as a spiritual threat, and the concern for American religion was just as important as any of the public's other fears.

Just as the Federalist clergy and party leaders expressed, the general population considered France a threat to the United States because the public also regarded their nation as sacred. A collection of South Carolinians make this point clear in a 1798 address they wrote to President Adams: "The most unreasonable demands have been made upon this country… demands which, if submitted to, would prostrate the United States at the feet of France and convert her from a

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[50] Alexander DeConde. *The Quasi-War:The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801,* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 47-52.

[51] Inhabitants of Concord in Massachusetts to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 8.

free and independent nation, into a tributary and degraded providence."[52] Another group from Worcester County, Maryland made a similar point when they said, "While we lament the necessity of having to negotiate with characters who do not hesitate to acknowledge their own prostitution, and to declare that the… only measure of their exactions is the extent of their power – To this conduct, those amiable principles of religion, morality, and forbearance… exhibit to America a pleasing contrast."[53] The excerpts evince that public opinion shifted to incorporate the nationalist religious considerations that the Federalist political and religious leaders promulgated.

Americans appropriated the religious language and discourse provided by the Federalists to express a sense of civic piety as well. Citizens from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for example, wrote, "the conduct and designs of the French republic… are such as to produce alarm and indignation in every breast which feels for the honor and happiness of America, and the excited apprehensions of every man… who may place of sense of justice, morality, and piety, among the ornaments of his nature and the blessings of society."[54] These Pennsylvanians made the point that France was a threat to the core values of the American nation and as a result, all true patriots should be "alarmed" by France's actions. Inhabitants of Caroline County in Maryland pushed this point further in a public address where they proposed that "whilst we appreciate peace and

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[52] Citizens of Charleston to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 340.

[53] Citizens of Worcester County in Maryland to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 264.

[54] Inhabitants of the Borough of Harrisburgh to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 222.

tranquility as the first of national blessings, and the end of every wise government; we shall ever unite to place the necessary barriers against the impulses of passion, the combination of foreign power, the haste of folly, or the spirit of encroachment."[55] The repetition of ideas in these two excerpts from two different groups in two different states makes it clear that a shared perception of France began to develop among Americans. France's actions loomed large over the values, namely the religious values, that formed the foundation of American society and for that reason, true, patriotic Americans had a duty as Christians and as citizens to "ever unite" against the French menace. A public address written by a group from Accomack County, Virginia succinctly portrayed the growing sense of duty among American when they simply stated, "…[we] feel ourselves called upon by duty, as well as inclination, to… unanimously declare, our entire approbation of the measures which have hitherto been pursued by our government."[56] In addition to showing the sense of duty that existed among Americans, the Virginians' statement also introduces the idea that Federalists' nationalist and religious language was reflected in the widespread approbation for the defense plan that developed.

The approbation that the citizens of Accomack County expressed combined with the support from citizens in Maryland and South Carolina is evincive of a widespread acceptance of the Federalist defense plan. The abrupt shift toward support of Federalist policies was so widespread, in fact, that William Linn expressed in a 1798 sermon that he was, "happy, union in

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[55] Citizens of Caroline County in Maryland to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 271.

[56] Inhabitants of Accomack County in Virginia to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 310.

the means of [self-defense] is daily gaining ground, in proportion as the transactions are understood."[57] Linn's assessment of the situation was correct – as Americans were informed of what was happening in France by Federalist political and religious leaders, the opposition to defense against France waned and support for Federalist policies increased exponentially and Americans used religious rhetoric to express their support for Federalist policies against France. A group of young men from Portsmouth, Delaware, for example, wrote, "we cannot but declare that we think it a most prosperous omen, that Providence has placed at the head of government, at this alarming crisis, to defend our national honor and independence, a man… who had so large a share in procuring those individual blessings."[58] These young men expressed their support for the Federalists in that they literally praised Adams a godsend and viewed his policies as heaven-sent. Another group of Americans from Maryland were more explicit in this approbation of the Federalists: "Although we highly value the blessings of peace, yet under the protection of Heaven, we are determined to rely with full confidence on your well tried patriotism and wisdom, firmly resolved to support with our lives and property, the honor, the liberty, and independence of our country."[59] This excerpt shows that these Americans believed that the Federalist defense plan was not only the best course of action for America; it shows that they believed that defense was a divine mission. Another group of citizens from Harrison County,

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[57] William Linn, *A Discourse on National Sins,* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1798), 31-32.

[58] Young Men of Portsmouth to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 23.

[59] Citizens of Dorchester County in Maryland to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 267; similar point made by Inhabitants of Shepherd's Town in, *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 320.

Virginia echoed the point made by the Dorchester County group, and pushed the sentiments a bit further. They wrote, "we trust, that the God of our armies will aid us in defending, what we thankfully enjoy as his gift – and impute the guilt of offensive war, to those who have rejected the offers of peace… who… have plundered us on the high seas… who have endeavored to subvert our government…"[60] Just as the young men from Delaware and the group from Maryland, these Virginians' language made the point that America was a sacred nation and for that reason, the nation's citizens had a civic and pious duty to protect the country but whereas defense was the only course of action previously supported, the citizens from Virginia went so far as to use religious discourse and reasoning to support "offensive war."

Prior to the Federalists' use of popular religion to reach the public, Americans sympathized with the French cause and refused to turn their backs on America's "sister republic." As Federalists used the religious sphere to make *their* reality of Franco-American relations and policies clear to the citizens of the United States, the general public began to express similar ideas in a similar language. The concepts of Christian republicanism and civic piety took root within the American public and the people used those nationalist, religious ideas to form the framework of their support for the Federalists' proposed policies. The abrupt shift in public opinion regarding the French, especially in states such as South Carolina and Virginia that were steeped in pro-French sensibility, is evidence that the Federalists were successful. Their decision to use popular religion garnered the popular support the party needed to justify their policies and by the summer of 1798, just a few months after Hamilton expressed his desire to use the power of religion to sway the American people, the Quasi-War was underway.

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[60] Inhabitants of Harrison County in Virginia to John Adams, in *A Selection of Patriotic Addresses to the President of the United States,* ed. William Austin, (Boston: John W. Folsom, 1798), 315.

Conclusion

The Federalists' efforts to shape and maintain public opinion through their use of popular religion and nationalist, religious rhetoric show that although the Quasi-War itself was a brief episode in the founding era, it remains an important reflection of the sentiments, ideas, and developments of the time, especially those regarding the place of religion in American culture. As the Federalists were reaching out to Americans with concepts of civic piety and Christian republicanism, the nation as a whole was still fumbling to create an identity. But twenty years prior, the United States was a series of disparate colonies with varied interests and values; thus, the colonies-turned-states were still trying to find a common cause and common culture to unite them. The sacred cause of country that the Continental Congress and eventually the Federalist political and religious leaders spouted became the foundation for that shared identity. And although the immediate goal of the Federalists' attempt to unite Americans under the auspices of civic piety and Christian nationalism was to create a strong support system for their defense plan, the ultimate goal of the Federalists' efforts was to help fashion and foster an American identity that would both serve the party's purposes and shape the nation well into the future.

In many ways, the Federalists' efforts to craft an American identity that worked to their advantage could be classified as a failure. The controversial policies that the party leaders passed at the apex of their popularity proved too much for the American people and as a result, Americans moved away from the conservative brand of nationalism put forth by the Federalists and embraced the democratic ideals of the Democratic Republicans. After John Adams' failed attempt at reelection in 1800, the party remained disorganized and defunct until it dissolved almost two decades later. Although the Federalists failed to craft a concept of American culture that would have maintained the widespread support they received in the late 1700s, the party was

successful in inculcating the concepts of Christian republicanism and civic piety into the collective American psyche.[61]

Throughout the Early Republic period and even into present day, there is a clear underlying perception of America as a chosen nation burdened with a duty to maintain and protect its divine rights and freedoms. Ideas such as manifest destiny and modern invocations of the Monroe Doctrine are laced with this perception of America as a sacred place, a "New Israel." And while these ideas began during the Revolution, actions such as the Federalists' use of religion in the efforts to create support for the Quasi-War made these concepts of civic piety and Christian republicanism relevant and accessible during the Early Republic period, thus laying the foundation for the political and religious pillars that would, and in many ways still do, form the foundation for American society and identity.

[61] Manning J. Dauer, *The Adams Federalists*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1953), 263-264.

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